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nothing else) they were as much bound to act on the commands of religion as to eat their meals or take any means to any end whatever.

The position here taken up combines the perception of the mind with the sentiment of the heart, and so affords opposition alike to the sensualist and the advocates of expediency—it places morality in intimate connection with religion by referring to an internal principle—it views holiness and happiness as different notions of the same object, namely, a state of the heart and will—it places reason not in opposition to religion, but makes "reason pass into faith only where it has reached its own horizon, even as day steals into twilight, and twilight hushed and breathless passes into night; but it is sacred night in which we behold suns of other worlds only to keep the soul collected in adoration of the great *I am* whose will is the law, whose voice is the harmony of the Universe."*

THE TRAGEDY OF CHILDHOOD.

By MISS H. L. HARVEY.

It is an incontestable fact that we have all been children once; yet one is sometimes half inclined to doubt it, so many persons appear to retain no recollection whatever of any such phase in their lives. To them, children are a class distinct and apart, much as old people are to children; they judge of their natures, needs, and mental processes, not by personal experience, nor even by observation, but by an artificial standard of their own. Thus and so, they say, a being three feet high, and whose knowledge of life is bounded by the nursery, may be supposed to think and act; and they suppose accordingly, quite to their own satisfaction; and fail altogether to recognize either the limitations or the far-reaching developments of a child's intelligence.

All this is forcibly brought before one's mind by an article in the *Fortnightly* for September last, by E. V. Lucas, entitled "Some Notes on Poetry for Children." Mr. Lucas tells us, and we cannot but acknowledge the justice of the imputation, that, hitherto, collections of poetry for children have been directed not so much to please the taste of a child, as that of an adult; that, in fact, however much grown-up persons may enjoy the contemplation of infancy, children do not want to read about childhood. A good story, about the doings of children, told simply and frankly from their own standpoint, as in Jacob Abbott's "Franconia Stories," is one thing; such stories are much appreciated by children, but the graces and naïvetés of childhood delight them not; and it would be strange if they did.

In poetry, especially, children like to have their imagination exercised; stirring scenes of adventure and romance, the wonderful, the heroic, the tragical, appeal to them far more, in my belief, than the merely pretty and amusing. And here I join issue with Mr. Lucas, who asserts that a book of poetry for children should "amuse and delight from first page to last." "It should," he says, "though not in itself poetry, stand for poetry in the minds of its young readers. . . It should be as gay as it could be made, compatible with technical excellency."

* The concluding words of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.

But surely children want something more than this! and surely, surely, Mr. Lucas is mistaken in thinking that good poetry is thrown away on them! One does not expect a child to appreciate Gray's *Elegy*, or Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality," but that is not because the poetry is good, but because the subjects of which they treat do not interest children. I know a little girl of eight years old, who revels in Tennyson, and Longfellow, and Scott, and Macaulay; who quotes "Macbeth," and sedately gives it as her opinion that "Tennyson wrote very good poetry," and it is by no means the "gay" and the "amusing" in these writers that chiefly appeal to her, but such poems as "Oriana" and "Rosabelle"; in pictures, too, she favours such subjects as "The Sacrifice of Iphigenia," "Bondage," and the like.

In my early youth we had a little volume of poems, called "Tales of Wonder," looked upon with disfavour by our elders, but which was to us an unfailing source of delight. There was a fine grisly flavour about it, and its pages overflowed with romance and mystery. Therein we read, with a thrill of delicious horror, of "Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene," of the "Erl King," and the "Cloud King," and the young woman who married a water-sprite. There were several of Scott's poems in it, too, "Glenfinlas," and "The Eve of St. John," and, above all, "The Fire King," that sorrowful story of the faithless Count Albert, and the "fair Rosalie," who disguised herself in male attire and went to the Holy Land, to rescue her renegade lover from the Saracens.

"Oh, she's ta'en a horse should be fleet at her speed,
And she's ta'en a sword should be sharp at her need;
And she has ta'en shipping to Palestine's land,
To ransom Count Albert from Soldanry's hand.

* * * * *
"The battle is over on Bethsaida's plain,
Oh, who is yon Paynim lies stretched 'mid the slain?
And who is yon page, lying cold at his knee?
Oh, who but Count Albert and fair Rosalie!"

—Winding up with the comfortable assurance that:

"Her soul to high mercy Our Lady did bring,
His went on the blast to the dread Fire King."

If I am not mistaken, most children with any imagination
—and very few are without it—will prefer poetry such as

this, to "Lear's Nonsense Book," and similar collections of comic verse, recommended by Mr. Lucas.

And this brings me to the point of my argument, which is that childhood is the age rather of tragedy than of comedy. In later years, when we have, perhaps, had some acquaintance with real tragedy, we may turn for relief to light and amusing reading; we like our novels to end well, and we may, even, in the bottom of our hearts, prefer a good comedy to the most moving representation of "Hamlet" or "Othello"; but to children there is a wonderful fascination in tragedy; partly because it seems to them grand and mysterious; partly because there is so much that is tragical in childhood itself.

It will, I am aware, be regarded as flat heresy to hint that childhood is not a season of unalloyed happiness; the poets, from Shakespeare to Wordsworth, are all agreed that it is so; and Mr. Lucas speaks in unqualified terms of "the blessedness of the state of childhood." No doubt it has its own peculiar and vivid joys, but these are apt to be exaggerated in the retrospect, and glorified with the halo of distance, just as the child looks forward to the time when he shall be grown up, as the pinnacle of earthly happiness; and, in recalling the pleasures, we are too ready to forget the tribulations and unspoken sufferings of childhood.

Looking back to my own early days,—and, in such a question as this, one has to fall back on personal reminiscences,—it is a very chequered picture that presents itself to my memory. With all the advantages of a pleasant country home, kind parents, and a goodly number of brothers and sisters, I have a general impression of being constantly at war with fate and circumstances and constituted authority. I used to long for some sort of tribunal, or court of appeal, where children could explain their burning wrongs without being considered naughty and impertinent. It is easy to see, now, that these "burning wrongs" were largely imaginary—the result of hurt vanity and bad temper; but at the time they seemed very real.

This inability to explain oneself is, I think, one of the heaviest trials of childhood; *was*—perhaps I ought say—for the children of the present day have the advantage of being on terms of far greater freedom with their parents than were

their predecessors of the last generation, and they are not so handicapped in this respect. Wonderful to me are the questions which they ask, the mental processes which they lay bare to their elders, nowadays; matters which we should have locked up in the most secret recesses of our bosoms, or revealed only to a chosen companion of our own size. For example, when my sisters and I were little girls, we had, like so many other children, a number of imaginary countries, which were a source of endless occupation and delight to us. We drew maps of them, invented and illustrated long histories of their inhabitants, had our reigning dynasties, our court chronicles, and our "Child's Guide to Knowledge," but all this was our own private possession, in which our elders had no share. Now, the youthful representatives of one sister have also their imaginary countries—a whole universe of them. They will show you their maps, plans of their solar systems and polar expeditions, stories and illustrations of their domestic scenes; nay, they have a telephone in the very parlour, communicating directly with these unknown regions, through which they hold long and exciting conversations with the inhabitants, openly and in the presence of their elders. It is charming, it is delightful, to be thus taken into their confidence; but one cannot help feeling that there must be a certain aroma missing in their enjoyment; and it may be a certain reticence lacking in their manners; for every advance in civilisation is sure to have its drawbacks.

But even for the modern child there are some troubles that must be endured alone, because the fondest parent would not be likely to understand them; those awful nervous terrors, for instance, which beset children, and which could not possibly be divulged to a grown-up person, who would probably explain them away, or perhaps laugh at them, and would take for granted that they must be dissipated when once proved to be unreasonable or ridiculous. It may be Rats or Robbers, or Wolves, or the Day of Judgment, or War. A little boy told me once that he had dreamed that a War came up the road and got in at his window; he slept alone, poor little fellow, though only about six years old. Another little boy that I knew fell into a nervous panic when he heard the sound of heavy rain on the window or roof as he lay in bed.

Robert Louis Stevenson knew all about it, and his description of a little boy going to bed, in "A Child's Garden of Verse," gives one a cold shiver down the back—

"Now my little heart goes beating like a drum,
With the breath of the Bogie in my hair,
And all round the candle the crooked shadows come,
And go trooping along up the stair.

"The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of the lamp,
The shadow of the child that goes to bed—
All the wicked shadows going tramp, tramp, tramp,
With the black night overhead."

My own especial Bogie was fires. Oh, those awful long black hours of the winter nights, when I lay, shivering with fright, and often bathed in perspiration, afraid to go to sleep, because my dreams were filled with lurid horrors; afraid to stay awake, because the agony of apprehension was almost more than I could bear. More than once I have crept, barefooted (slippers might have betrayed me), downstairs, and along the cold hall, to make sure that the kitchen fire was safe within bounds. The thought of the coming night oppressed me all day like a nightmare. I kept marks in certain books in which there were pictures of fires, that I might not come upon them unexpectedly. And this is the sort of thing that numbers of children go through, often entirely unknown to their parents. A grey-headed man told me the other day that, when a child, he habitually slept with his head under the bed clothes from fear of fire.

How are these imaginary terrors, and all the inexplicable wrongs and woes of childhood, to be reached and remedied? It is easy to lay down rules and make suggestions; but after all, with children, as with all other sentient beings, the only safe rule is to try to put oneself in their place; and surely it ought not to be so very difficult, since, as I observed before, we *have* all been children once; and for the matter of that, in many ways, we are all children still—

"Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither,—
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."